

THE  
CHARGE  
OF  
RICHARD,  
LORD BISHOP of  
Bath and Wells,  
TO THE  
CLERGY of his DIOCESE,  
AT HIS  
Primary Visitation  
Begun at  
AXEBRIDGE,

June 2. 1692.

*By Richard Middelton*

LONDON,

Printed by J. H. for Brab. Aylmer, at the Three  
Pigeons in Cornhill, 1693.

THE  
CITY OF

RICHARD

LORD BISHOP

Bath and Wells

TO THE

CLERGY of the DIOCESE

AT HIS

Ordinary's Installation

By

AXE BRIDGE

1832

LONDON

Printed by R. M. for G. B. at the  
Green in Court, 1832.

*My Dear Brethren,*

**T**HE design of my calling you together at this time is, that I may, as much as lies in me, set those things right that are amiss; and if you meet me here with the same purpose I cannot but promise my self very good success from the blessing of God and our united Endeavours.

It stands us very much in hand to improve the time we have for the good of those Souls that Christ hath purchased with his pretious blood. There are many considerations which may awaken us to the greatest diligence in this matter. The care of Souls is of all things of the greatest weight; We must shortly give a severe account of our discharge of this great duty; we have sins enough of our own to account for, we had not need <sup>the</sup> addition of the guilt of others; Those that miscarry through our negligence we must answer for; On the other hand if we use due care, and win Souls to God, if we convert Sinners from the evil of their wayes how blessed a work will this be, and how great shall be our reward? To

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be thus imployed is a God-like work; 'Tis an imitation of God and our Blessed Saviour; 'Tis a work of the greatest charity, an instance of the highest wisdom, an imitation of the most conspicuous example of our Lord and Master. Besides, 'tis a work we stand obliged to, not onely as we are Christians, but more especially as we are the Ministers of Jesus Christ. we are *stewards* of the mysteries of God, *Ambassadors* for Christ, we are appointed to *govern* and *oversee* the flock of Christ, *labourers* in God's Vineyard; all which expressions intimate to us the need of great circumspection and diligence. Happy, most happy will those men be who do their utmost to gain Souls to God and to righteousness. *He that converteth a sinner from the Error of his wayes shall save a Soûl from death, and shall hide a multitude of Sins, Jam. 5. 20. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the Stars for ever and ever. Dan. 12. 3.*

If we will take the pains to reflect upon the promises we made when we entered into Holy Orders, and the Holy Sacrament that then we took upon those promises, and whereby we bound ourselves to make them good, we shall find this of mighty force to awaken us to the utmost care and



and circumspection. We professed then to be inwardly moved by the *Holy Ghost* and truly called to that holy Office: That we would diligently frame and fashion our own and families lives to the doctrine of Christ: Diligently to minister the Doctrine and Sacraments and Discipline of the Church: That we would banish all erroneous doctrines, and use publick and private monitions, and exhortations to the sick and the whole. That we would be diligent in prayers and reading and studying the Scripture: That we would set forward quietness, peace and love. Upon these terms we were admitted into this Holy Office.

How far we have made these promises good we ought to consider. God will not be mocked. If we have failed 'twill concern us highly to return to our duty, and to take that diligent care of our flocks that we may both save our selves and them that bear us.

And to this great end and purpose I commend to your care the following particulars.

First, That ye would be *Examples* to your people. Teach them not onely by your *Sermons* but by your *Lives*. So live that they may safely follow you. Tread out the steps before them that they are to take towards Heaven. Let them see that you do that your selves which you perswade them to do. This is the most compendious

1 Tim. 4. 16.

and powerfull way of teaching and perswasion.

2 This is the way that our great Lord and Master took. St. *Luke* calls his Gospel a *Treatise* of all the things that *Jesus* began to *Do* and *Teach*. *Act. 1. 1.* He did not onely instruct his followers by his Sermons, his Parables, his Conferences, and wise Speeches, but by his actions and the whole course of his life. They might from his life learn that *Piety*, that *Charity*, that *Righteousness*, that *Abstraction* from, and *Contempt* of the world which he commended to them from his *Doctrine*. He not onely commanded but led them as became the great Captain of their Salvation. His Example was instructive as well as his Sermons. They might see in him that exemplified which he preached to them. He scattered beams of light as he went along, and his disciples might clearly see what they were to do by what he did. He taught them to believe in God in all difficulties and straits, to love and honour him, to worship him and be resigned to his will: But then all this might be learned from his Example also. He trusted in him in the barren wilderness, and upon the troubled Sea, and hanging on the Cross. He loved him above all, and sought not his own glory but that of him that sent him. He was much in Prayer to God, frequently  
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at the Temple where he was worshipped, the zeal of his fathers house eat him up; to him he resigned himself under the greatest agony, saying, *not my will but thine be done.* Jesus taught his followers exact righteousness, and he practised it also. He taught them to love each other and to forgive their Enemies. And he gave them a great example of it. For he went about doing good, he fed the hungry, and taught the ignorant, and relieved the oppressed, and made joy and gladness wherever he came: And for his bitter Enemies he with his last breath prays for them, *Father forgive them for they know not what they doe.* 'Twere easie to shew in a great number of instances, that Jesus did practise himself what he taught us. He commends to us humility, and bids us learn of him for he was lowly in heart: nor was there ever such a mirror of profound Humility in the World. The same may be said of Patience, and Contempt of the World, Fortitude and Courage, &c. Our Lord taught these lessons by his great Example.

And thus must we do: We must do as well as teach. This is the way to bring Souls to God. Let's hear St. Peter speak. *The Elders which are among you I exhort.... Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by*

by constraint but willingly, not for filthy lucre's sake but of a ready mind, neither as being Lords over God's heritage but being Examples to the flock. 1 Pet. 5. 1, 2, 3. This way of example it seems is the fittest method and course; and so indeed it is. 'Twill do more good than violence and compulsion; more than subtilty and dry reasoning. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your Good works and glorify your father which is in Heaven. Matt. 5. 16. Again, In all things shewing thy self a pattern of Good works, &c. and that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed. Tit. 11. 7, 8. This St. Peter puts Christians upon as the best way to gain upon the Heathen world: That they may (says he) by your Good works, which they shall behold glorify God in the day of visitation. 1 Pet. 11. 12.

By this means we shall demonstrate that our Religion is practicable: This is of great consequence, for men are too apt to think Religion a yoke too heavy for them to bear: Hence it is that they are discouraged. They attempt not to take up a burden which they think they cannot bear. Practice your Religion and you will confute this dangerous mistake, and they will follow that will not lead the way. Jesus did thus, as ye have heard. He practised his own rules,  
and

and clothed with our flesh and natural infirmities, overcame the Devil and World and obtained the Crown. By his *Precepts* he taught what we ought to do, and by his *Life* what might be done. *Si precipientem sequi non potes, sequere antecedentem.* Men are apt to follow example, and can never pretend that impossible to be done which they see done before them.

Lactant. Inst.  
lib. I. c. 24.

Again; An exemplary life will much tend to beget in men a belief of the *truth* of our Religion. Every man cannot judge of the force of arguments and other motives of Credibility. He that lives well is a good defender of his faith, and will, if not *Convert*, yet, at least *put to silence* gain-sayers. The people will think sin a great *evil* and *heaven* a great *reality* when they see their teachers eschew all appearance of evil and vigorously pursue heavenly things. Christian Religion was propagated at first by *miracles* and an *holy life*: *miracles* are *ceased* with the reason of them; an *holy life* hath a mighty force still. And did we live up to our Religion we should go far in convincing of unbelievers. An example of virtue hath a powerfull influence.

Besides what hath been said, an exemplary life would give the people an excellent *idea* of the *amiable*ness and *glories* of Religion. Certain it is that

Religion

Religion is the most excellent thing in the world. Did we discern its beauties, and discover its perfections, we could not but be ravish'd with it. 'Tis the highest perfection of our nature, the greatest instrument of peace and happiness; our truest interest, and our glory, the greatest advancement that our natures are capable of towards God, and eternal rest. Suppose a man to live up to his Religion and how goodly a creature will he be? He will discover the beauties of Godliness who leads a godly life; He that loves God above all, that fears him only, prays earnestly to him, gives him continual thanks, and owns him in all his wayes: Such a man will commend *Righteousness* which does as he would be done by, who is mercifull to the poor and just to all: The modest and temperate and humble man commends Sobriety to others most powerfully.

But on the other hand, how great are the mischiefs of a *bad example*, especially in ministers, and the guides of Souls? who will practise that Religion which they see disobeyed by the ministers thereof? The people will question the truth of that Religion which you *commend* indeed in your Pulpits but *deny* in your Lives: They will question a future state if they see you neglect it. They will not be forward to mind heavenly things when

when they see you mind earthly. They'll rather follow your practice than your Sermons. And will entertain but a mean opinion of that Religion which you preach up and despise at the same time. If you live amiss you may preach long enough and do no good: Your bad example will do more hurt than ever your preaching will do good.

There is no man so vile as a profane Minister of Religion; He is of all the most abject, the most self-condemned, and destitute of plea, and liable to the heaviest plagues of another life. If the Religion he teacheth be *false* why does he commend it to his people? if *good* why does he not practice it? He must answer for the souls he misleads; Their guilt will be required of him. Oh the mischief of such an example! it wounds many Souls at once. It reproaches our Religion, undermines our Church, breeds Dissenters, produceth open Enemies to our order, our function and constitution. These men are the Enemies of the Church of *England*, these are its assassins, from these men she hath received the most dangerous wounds and blemishes. Good God awaken us to a consideration of our danger this way! That Church can never be secure whose pillars and supporters are weak and rotten.

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Secondly,



Secondly, we must take care that our *families* be exemplary also. We must see that all under our roof be *patterns* of virtue and goodness, and that the people may learn to govern their children and servants from what they see us do. Hence 'tis required of a Bishop ( who is highly concerned to reprove the faults of those under his charge and influence ) not onely that he himself should be *blameless and of good behaviour, apt to teach, &c.* but also that he should have a well ordered family and obedient Children, and then it is added *that he may be able to exhort, and convince gainsayers*; which he will not so successfully do who hath the same disorders within his own walls, which he ought not to allow in the Church of God. And the same reason requires that the *Deacons* should not onely themselves be *grave*, but that their Wives should be *grave, sober, not slanderers, but faithfull in all things.* It stands you in hand to instruct your children and servants in the principles of Religion, and the great difference between right and wrong, *good and evil.* Possess them with the fear of the great God, with sound principles of true Religion and Vertue. You must read the Scriptures constantly to them, pray constantly with them and for them: make your houses nurseries of Piety: Teach your domesticks:

Tit. 1. 6, 9.  
1 Tim. 3. 4,  
8, 11.

mesticks to pray to God, and to give him thanks: use such care that it may be difficult for any in your families to miscarry; so order things that your houses may be such schools of vertue that your people may discern in your children and servants the effects of your care and discipline. Banish from your own houses all intemperance and profaneness, all evil speaking, and such as are addicted to fraud and deceit. Take up the Psalmist's resolution. *Him that hath an high look and proud heart will not I suffer. Mine Eyes shall be upon the faithfull of the land, that they may dwell with me: He that walketh in a perfect way he shall serve me: He that worketh deceit shall not dwell in my house: He that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight.* Psalm 101. 5, 6, 7. Endeavour to make your children and servants the servants of God, and you will secure that duty and obedience which is owing to your selves and much advance the interest of Religion. This is the duty of all, but especially of you that are teachers of others. And this was the care of those who were the servants of God of old, and will with God's blessing be attended with great success. *Abraham* was a great example of this care, and found the good effects of it in his life-time. *I know him (says the Lord) that he will command his Children and*

his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment. Gen. 18. 19. We read of him that he removed with Lot, and the Souls which they had gotten in Haran. ch. 12. 5. And elsewhere 'tis said that he armed his trained, or instructed Servants, born in his own house. ch. 14. 14. There is an opinion among the ancient Jews that these Souls were such as he had profelyted to the true Religion, brought over from Paganism to the worship of the true and living God.

And we find great effects of *Abraham's* care, both in the submission of his Son *Isaac*, ch. 22. 6, 9. and the admirable fidelity of his Servant. ch. 24.

Thirdly, The next care must be in teaching and instructing your people. And this you are greatly concerned in. I know there are several ways of teaching, and therefore I shall consider them apart and speak of them distinctly.

I. By *preaching* the word of God, or publick expounding the holy Scriptures to our people. This is an unquestionable duty and incumbent upon every one that hath undertaken the cure of Souls. *St. Paul* lays a vehement charge upon *Timothy* to discharge it. *I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick*  
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*and the dead at his appearing and his Kingdom: Preach the word, be instant in Season, out of Season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine.* 2 Tim. 4. 1, 2. Let's not deceive our selves: We are strictly obliged to the discharge of this duty. No condition of life, no circumstance can excuse us; where we are able to do it we must do it by our selves, and not shift off this labour upon others and neglect it our selves. We think Mothers obliged (where they are able) to nurse their own children, and shall we neglect our flocks and put them out to be nursed by Curates, and those too, very often, unfit for that care? Our Saviour and his holy Apostles gave us another sort of Example. Shall we leave our Sheep, and hunting after fleeces elsewhere neglect them of whom we have taken the charge? God forbid. *Jesus* required something more when he put his disciples on feeding his sheep. God will not be mocked: He requires a greater care and will bring us to a severe account.

But for the better discharge of this duty I must commend to you the following particulars. [ 1. ] That you insist chiefly on the *unquestionable* and main things of Religion; avoiding foolish questions ( Tit. 3. 3. ) nice speculations and amusing

sing subtilties that have no tendency to make men better. acquaint your people with the depraved and corrupt condition of lapsed mankind, of its weakness and inability and obnoxiousness to God's displeasure. Acquaint them with the method God used for our redemption by *Jesus Christ*; with the several offices of Christ and how he discharged them; with the nature of the new covenant or covenant of Grace; with the conditions of it on our part; with the nature of a saving faith, and the motives of credibility with which the Gospel is attended. Explain to them the nature and necessity of repentance, and the danger of delaying it; the great necessity of an holy life, of piety, justice, charity, temperance, humility, purity and mortification of our lusts and headstrong passions. Preach frequently against the reigning sins of the time, against drunkenness, common swearing, uncleanness, profanation of the Lord's day, neglect of the publick worship of God, of publick prayers and sacraments. Put them upon worshipping God in their families, upon praying with their children and servants. If it be possible bring every family to it; press upon them the absolute necessity of it, assist and direct them that they may do it as they ought. Furnish them with books and helps, and where  
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you cannot afford to be at that expence get the help of those that are able and willing. Let them know the worth of their Souls, the certainty of a future judgment, the vanity of this world and uncertainty of life. [ 2. ] Secure a good intention.

Do what you do for God's sake, and for the good of Souls. Be sincere and without guile. Do nothing for ostentation of your wit or learning, nothing for low or mean regards. St. Paul hath put what I mean into a few words.

*Our Exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile: But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the Gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men but God, who tryeth our hearts: For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know; nor a cloke of covetousness, God is witness.*

*Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burthensome as the Apostles of Christ. 1 Thess. 2. 3, 4, 5, 6.*

Be conscientious to your self of no other design but the good of Souls and facilitating your future account, and you will not miss your reward hereafter whatever be your success here. [ 3. ] You must use great diligence also.

*Preach the word, be instant in season, out of season. 2 Tim. 4. 2. Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. ---*

*Meditate upon these things, give thy self wholly to them,*

then, that thy profiting may appear to all. 1 Tim. 4. 13, 15. If after all you take care that your preaching [ 4. ] be attended with an unblamable life you will render it more effectual. These things command and teach: Let no man despise thy youth: But be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. 1 Tim. 4. 11, 12. This was the course St. Paul took himself. 1 Thess. 2. 10. And you must especially take care to carry your selves with all gentleness, and charity towards your people. Let them see that you have for them the compassions of a Father, and that you can bear with their frowardness and infirmities. Let them see that you love their Souls, and seek them and not theirs. If they be unkind be gentle towards them and overcome evil with good. Let's hear how St. Paul did. He was gentle as a nurse to her children, content to dye for them, he had the tenderness of a Father. 1 Thess. 2. 7, 8, 11. The servant of God must not strive but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient. In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth. 2 Tim. 2. 24, 25.

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II. Another way of teaching is by way of *Catechising*; this, I fear, is too much neglected. And yet nothing can be more necessary or of greater moment. Our Church does by a Ca-Can. LIX. non strictly oblige you to spend half an hour every Sunday and Holyday in this exercise, and upon any neglect thereof directs that the Minister be reprov'd sharply, and after this upon neglect to be suspended, and then if he do it not to be excommunicated. You are also obliged by a law as you may see in the *Rubrick* at the end of the Catechism in the Common Prayer: But you are obliged to it as it is a main part of your ministerial duty. And I must put you upon the diligent discharge of it, and do require you to do it by vertue of your canonical obedience. This is the way to build wisely, and without it you build without a foundation. Your Sermons will be of little fruit if you take not this course, and if you do they are like to be of great. Do this as you ought and you will soon find it ( I can say, I thank God I have found if so ) very advantageous. But then you must explain the Catechism to them, and take such pains in it that they ( who are thus taught ) may not onely be able to say it without Book, but understand what they say, and express themselves

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in other words, by which you may be assured that they do understand it aright.

III. There is another way of teaching which I may call *occasional* that is not to be neglected. When you visit your people, or they visit you, take all occasions you can to instill into them principles of Religion and Vertue. Our Saviour taught frequently this way, and 'twill well become you to follow his example. And you will do well not onely to take but seek all occasions of doing your people good.

Fourthly, You must also be much in *Prayer* that God would prosper the good Seed which you sow. *Paul* may plant and *Apollos* water, but it is *God* which gives the increase. And here I commend to you all prayer, private in your Closets, and prayer in your Families, and the publick prayers in your Churches. And for the last of these I would have you very careful to omit no occasions of reading them fully as they are appointed, and with great devotion and reverence: Do all you can to bring your people to them, and to keep up the credit and reputation of this publick service of the Church. Labour much with your people to take off their prejudices, and to bring them to a better sense of things. And have a  
care

care to read those occasional prayers on the Fast-  
ing days, and other times appointed, in behalf  
of the King and Queen and these Kingdoms: We  
have great cause to keep these Fasts religiously,  
and to solicit the protection of Heaven: Our all  
lies at stake, and our help is onely in the name of  
the Lord, who made Heaven and Earth.

Fifthly, You are also to *administer* the *Sacra-  
ments* as is appointed by the Church.

*Baptism* is the Sacrament of Initiation: By this  
we are entred into the Church: You are to take  
care (as directed in the Rubrick) that this be  
not delayed, and that it be done in the Church in  
the face of the Congregation. You are also to ex-  
plain in your Sermons the nature of this Sacrament,  
and the grounds of Infant Baptism, and often to ex-  
plain the Baptismal Vow, and call on your People  
to reflect upon it, and to consider the obligation  
that ariseth thence to a life of Vertue and Religion.

For the *Sacrament* of the *Lord's Supper* it is no-  
toriously neglected by the People to the great de-  
cay of Christian Piety. You are to take great  
pains in this matter. Let your people know  
that they are not at Liberty to receive it or omit  
it. That it is not onely commanded but com-  
manded by our dying Master, and dying for us,  
and as a standing memorial of his death, and

unparalleled love to us. If they plead the danger of receiving amiss, lay before them the danger also of not receiving at all. If they say they are not fit ask them when they will, and whether or not they be fit to die? and die they must whether they be fit or not. Take off all their pretences. Shew them how much frequent communion would advance Piety and good Will. Make them sensible of the great danger of neglecting this duty, and the great ingratitude to their dying Lord. But mistake me not. I am not after all for admitting promiscuously all that may offer themselves. The young must first be well instructed, the scandalous must be warned, and kept back, as the Rubrick directs, and those that have lived in variance and enmity must be reconciled. Frequent communion and due care and discipline would greatly amend this lower World.

Sixthly, You are diligently to visit the sick. The people indeed are obliged to send for you, but if they do not 'twill well become you to go to them. This visitation of the sick must by no means be neglected, tho' as the case may be we have sometimes but a faint prospect of doing any good. There are many cases that will exercise the greatest prudence and patience also. Perhaps you go to a man that hath lived a careless

less and profane life. You must have a care you do not send him to another world with false hopes; have a care you do not speak peace where God speaks none; awaken him to a sense of his Sin as well as *Danger*. Shew him the *evil* of *irreligion* and *profaneness*; shew him the great *ingratitude* of it with respect to the great God, the authour of our breath and being; Inquire strictly of him as to his past life; Whether he have injured any, or be in enmity: Put him upon *restitution* and *reconciliation* forthwith. Put him upon owning his wickedness to his shame, let him send for the companions of his folly, and warn them to amend their lives, and to break off the evil Course they are in. Let him be put upon all acts of charity and mercy according to his ability, upon patience under his sickness, as that which is but a just punishment of his Sins. Let him be made sensible of the danger of a late *repentance*, as we call that sorrow which in our sickness we express on account of our Sins. Whether it be after a Godly sort, and unto life God knows, we cannot tell. We have cause to fear that such mens sorrow is like that of a malefactors, not for his *fault* but for his being *apprehended*: The sinner is perhaps sorry, not that he hath been *wicked* but that God is *just*. Let us not neglect such a sinner

sinner, if he die we must leave him to God: If he recover we had need follow him, and put him upon paying his vows. We have seen many return to their vomit, and have proved their former sorrow not to have been after a Godly sort. You will find some others *fearful* beyond *cause*, and *trembling* lest they should fall short of God's Kingdom. Some cases you will meet with of considerable difficulty. In all which you are to use the greatest simplicity and diligence and courage too that you may minister where you can to the necessities of the sick: And to that purpose you are to pray for them with great fervor, and for your selves also you must pray that God would give you wisdom and courage to discharge your duty as ye ought.

Seventhly, You are with all your might to set forward *quietness*, *peace*, and *love*, as ye promised before ye were ordained. And this must be part of your study: Prevent as much as you can misunderstanding among your people, quarrels and suits of Law. Make peace among those that are at variance, and live at peace as much as lieth in you. Do what you can to persuade to love and to good works. And tho' there be among your people men of different opinions, yet let them all know that that will not excuse their  
love



love to each other. This is of the life and essence of Religion, it can never be without it. Press this hard upon your people and let them all see you practice it. Be kind to all, do them good offices, be so to them who do not attend your ministry as they should; overcome them with kindness if it be possible, and let them see you do not want compassion for them whatever their mistakes or prejudices may be. Widen not differences but do what is possible to heal them, and to preserve the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace.

Lastly, I commend to you great care of the poor and afflicted among your people. Let the poor find you their Patrons. Relieve them as far as you can, and stir up others to do it. Visit them in their Sickness as readily as ye do the rich; get them instructed, and especially be kind to God's poor, i. e. to those who are diligent in the worship of God, and are willing to be instructed. And be greatly carefull of the oppressed and afflicted of those that mourn for the death of friends, of those who meet with great losses; comfort them and let them see that you mourn with them. Take this occasion to awaken them to a greater care to serve God, that they may not be miserable in both worlds. If you watch these seasons

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and lay hold of them you may do very much good.

In a word, if you will take this course, and pursue it vigourously, and constantly implore the Divine aid and assistance, I make no doubt at all but you may do much, and that you will both save your selves and them that hear you.

There are besides what I put you in mind of, some other things which I think my self obliged to lay before you. And tho' the things I have named already do more immediately concern your office and function, yet the things I have still to offer will be worthy of your regard and care. I have told you what you are to *do* for the more succesfull discharge of your Holy Office: I will now put you in mind of some things you are to *be aware of*: And

First, Have a care that you give not *Certificates* and *Testimonials* to those who come for Orders or Institution unless you well know the persons whom you commend. It stands me in hand not to *lay hands suddenly* on any man, and you ought to be *carefull* how you give your hands also. When you commend them, you commend them to the service of God and the most holy function. I should be very tender of commending a *Servant* ( especially in a service of trust ) to my friend

friend or equall lest he should deceive him by proving unfaithfull: Does it not become us then to take great care whom we commend to this service of God, and to be stewards of his mysteries? The *Canon* requires the knowledge of the person commended, three years before: I would have you keep to that rule; And take such care that I may have no cause to suspect your testimonials. Can. XXXIV.

Secondly, Have a care of the *Titles* you grant to those who come for Orders. We cannot ordain without a title, nor is it fit we should. If Can. XXXIII. we do we are justly liable to maintain the Clerk, and if we refuse that, to be suspended. This is a most wholesome Law, and for the publick good: But some men have granted *false Titles* and supplanted a most excellent Constitution. The *Canon* requires a *true* and *undoubted Certificate* of this Title: But many have given such as are undoubtedly false. And by this means the Church hath been filled with supernumerary and very poor Ministers, who for want of bread have been tempted to do mean and vile things to keep themselves from starving. And these men must be unlearned of course being destitute of all means that tend to their obtaining it. If you give them false titles you set them wrong

at first. When they are to be ordained they declare that they are inwardly moved to that holy Office by the Holy Ghost, and truly called.... and that, according to the order of this Church. And yet he that lays this brings a lye in his right hand. I will tell you what I expect from you for the future. I will accept no Title from any of you unless you do, under your hands and seals, declare that you will allow the person to be ordained such a Sum *per annum* for *Suppling* such a place, and that you will not dismiss him without the consent of your *Diocesan*.

Thirdly, Have a great care that you do not present those young persons to be confirmed by the Bishop, who cannot render an account of their Faith as the Canon directs. The Rubrick requires that the person to be confirmed should be of a competent age, that he should have a God-father or God-mother a present witness of the confirmation, and that the fitness of the person to be confirmed be attested by the Minister with the said persons lives. I am most ready to confirm young persons provided this preparation and provision be made. Otherwise, I shall appoint some time for the solemn performance of this ancient and holy Action: And I shall endeavour so to do it that it may gain its end, and serve to set us forward

Canon LXL  
Rubr. after  
the Cate-  
chism.

forward towards the Kingdom of Heaven. The practice of Confirmation is both ancient and of admirable use, and may be so managed ( if it be not huddled over ) that it may be an excellent instrument of Religion. What the intention of Confirmation is may be learned from the office our Church hath appointed for it. We then take upon our selves that vow of Baptism, which, when we were young, we made by our sureties; we own that Religion our selves which, when we were young, others professed on our behalf. This is the reason of the institution. And therefore you that are to prepare persons for Confirmation may hence understand what you are to aime at: You are to put them in mind of their *baptismal Vow*, to explain the *several parts* of it, to *instruct* them in the principles of that Religion which they profess, to put them upon owning it publicly, and not to be ashamed of the Gospell and Cross of Christ. This is an admirable institution and wonderfully fitted for the advancement of true Religion. There was something like this practised in the Jewish Church. He that was circumcised in his Infancy, when he became of the age of 13 years, took upon himself the Mosaical precepts, and then he was called, *בן מצוה* a son of the precept; If after this he broke the Law he him-  
self

self was answerable for that breach, and not his Parents or Sureties. We are in our office of Baptism to mind the *Sponsors* for the baptized infant to take care that the child be instructed; And that the children be minded of their baptismal vow, and taught all the things which a Christian ought to know and believe to his Souls health. And after this they are warned to bring them to the Bishop to be confirmed. Your care then I must desire, and if that be not wanting you shall find me most ready to do what belongs to me.

Fourthly, Beware of *non-residence*. You are obliged to reside by the Law. Upon *Vicaridges* you are bound to reside by Vertue of the Oath you have taken. That Oath obligeth you unless you are dispensed with by the Bishop. That indeed is the only way to secure the non-resident Vicar from Perjury. Nothing else but that can do it. 'Tis nothing to this purpose what was the reason why all Vicars are obliged to take this Oath. When they have taken it they are obliged; if they reside not (unless dispensed with) they are *foresworn*. 'Tis certainly so, whatever a late Author in his book of Pluralities hath advanced to the contrary. An Oath is not to be trifled with. For my part I cannot see how *non-residence* can be justified, therefore I must and do require

quite you to reside upon your Cures. I hope I need say no more of the residence of *Vicars*, they are obliged by Oath, and very obnoxious if they reside not. But there are other *non-residents* that give great scandall. Some have two Livings and reside on neither as they ought. Others that have but one reside not on that. They take a Curacy, or pursue a Lecture elsewhere; They choose to live in a better aire, or among more fashionable persons than their poor neighbors are. They are for the conversation of Gentlemen and Men of learning; others spend their time vainly and foolishly and neglect those poor Souls which they have taken the charge of. Did *Jesus* do thus, did the Apostles, did the ancient Holy Bishops and Martyrs thus leave their Sheep? Did *Jesus* spend his time among Grandees and the Wits of the age? He preached much in *Galilee* an obscure and mean Country. He conversed with poor and weak, sickly and illiterate people. Good God awaken us to a just sence of things, and grant that while we leave our flocks the Souls that in our absence pass into another world do not carry thither just complaints against us. We shall have the blood of those Souls to answer for whom we have neglected.

Fifthly, Neglect not those days of Fasting appointed by Authority, nor any of those *Prayers* which

which are sent you, and required to be used during the present state of affairs. I hope you need not to be put in mind of these things, because you have taken an Oath to their present Majesties, and are I hope, sensible how much lies at stake. Our Religion, our Liberties and Properties, our Lives, our All call for this at our hands. We have the strongest obligations both from *duty* and *interest*. Besides we shall be self condemned if we are not hearty to that Government to which we have sworn, and to which we stand obliged several ways. We are very vile if we be not true to that Government which we have so solemnly owned: I am not willing to believe so hard a thing of you. If there be any such I wish they may not know the difference between a mild and gentle Government (under which we are) and the insolence of a foreign Tyrant: I wish they may never know what arbitrary Power and dragooning mean. Keep the days of Fasting with all manner of care; put your people in mind of them and give them due warning of their approach. And make the people sensible how much they are concerned in this matter.

Sixthly, You are also to take great care that you do not marry any without *Banns* or *Licence*, and that in this matter you govern your selves by



by the *Rubrick* and *Canon*. The Minister that Canon LXII offends is liable to be suspended for three years. And to the same penalty is he liable that marries those that are licensed at unreasonable times, or in a private place. Nor may he do it with Banns without the consent of Parents. And he that offends, tho' in an exempt Church, is liable to Canon LXIII the same penalty. This is the penalty, and yet as great as it is it hath not proved sufficient to restrain bad men; Inasmuch that other ways have been thought upon by our Law-makers to keep these bad men in awe. And there was a Bill on foot in Parliament not long since to punish it with death. I am sure the *Fault* is great whatever the punishment be. To steal a woman without consent of Parents is no small sin. But as great as that is 'tis not to be compared with that of the Minister. He cannot be supposed under the like temptation, and ought to be of a virtue more conspicuous. The Minister hath no plea, unless he plead poverty: But the thief and highwayman may plead this as justly as he. This plea ought not to save the robber from death, nor this offender from the penalty of our constitution.

That Minister that takes the liberty of Clandestine mariages must needs be an abandoned wretch. He does that which is most vile and unbecoming.

becoming his function. He prostitutes this holy State, and joyns them together whom God hath not joyned, and nature hath separated. He knows not the mischief he does. For what he knows he marries those that are married, or that ought not to marry: He may bless the incestuous, and the most unclean mixtures which God abhors, and nature it self forbids. What mischief to families, what horror to the minds of the married persons, what confusion and guilt follows not from thence? There's hardly any punishment great enough for so great a sinner. And sure I am there are less offences than this which our Laws have made Capitall. I cannot think so hardly of any man that hears me as to suppose him guilty of so great a Crime.

Marriage is Honourable in all, 'tis an holy state, 'twas appointed in the state of innocence, our Lord gave it credit by his presence and first miracle: No wonder, for 'tis, tho' not strictly a Sacrament, yet, a *mystery*, a *type* of the union betwixt Christ and his Church. So that whether we look to its institution, or to its reference to Christ and his Church, 'tis an honourable and holy state, and ought not to be contemned, much less prostituted. What hath been said is true of lawfull marriages; But he that joyns those together who ought

ought not to be joyned, he defaces this sacred institution, he profanes this holy Type of heavenly things, he destroyes as much as he can the figure of that Union which is betwixt Christ and his Church. We say all Marriages are made in Heaven: In which common saying there may be an higher sense implied than is commonly understood; but this can onely be meant of lawfull Marriages. For others they are contrived by those that belong to another Kingdom. It will ill become a Minister of Christ to have any hand in so detestable a practice.

Seventhly, You are to take great care to keep a Register of Christenings, Weddings, and Burials. This is a matter of great moment, and that wherein the estates and quiet of others is greatly concerned. You will learn what your duty in this matter is from the Canon, and I beseech you neglect it not. Can. LXX.

These things last named require our care, and our Canons and Constitutions direct us in the whole matter. There are still some things behind which I must also lay before you as things tending very much to the good of the whole, and they are these that follow.

I shall in far as I am able Ordain at the usual times appointed by our Church. And then as I must require the Arch-deacons to attend and offer those who come for Orders, so I desire you as you

have occasion to give out for me that I do expect that those who offer themselves for holy Orders should come to me some time before, that I may have time to inquire carefully into their *lives*, as well as examine them as to their *faith* and knowledge. 'Tis unreasonable to come for Orders but a day or two before the ordination Sunday. I cannot allow of such a practice as this unless I would lay hands suddenly, and be a partaker of other mens sins. 'Tis a matter that requires greater care, and more time. He that is to be ordained ought to spend some time in preparation for it, and the holy Sacrament attending upon it. Some time in Fasting and holy Exercises, and in such a course of devotion and abstraction from the world as that holy function and sacred office requires at our hands.

I must also desire you so to contrive things that those of you who live near to each other would sometimes meet together, and when you do so be usefull in your conversation with each other. Consult how you may do the most good to your people, exhort one another to love and to good works. Resolve to be faithfull to each other, and if you see any thing amiss in any of your Brethren reproach them not, but privately and gently tell them what you think may be reproveable. Speak ill of no man, especially where you know no evil; and where you do, let the offender have the first notice of his fault

fault from you. 'Tis unreasonable to publish a man's faults to another, and not tell him of them that is faulty. Perhaps by this course he would desist. Endeavour in your Conversation to be so exemplary that ye go away better than you came together. You that are wise and more learned may on these occasions afford great help to the younger of the Clergy, and less experienced. You may do them much good in directing their studies, and acquainting them with the best method of discharging their Office. Much good may be done this way: You may also consult together to assist the widows and children of Clergy-men deceased, and to make their sorrows as light as you can.

Let it not be in the power of any man to sow discord among you. Live in perfect peace with each other. If any difference arise end it among yourselves, or refer the matter to one of your Brethren. What mischief will your differences produce among your people? They'll be apt enough to go to law when they see you do it.

Be carefull you do not exceed in your Funerall Sermons in the praises of the dead. If you do the people will be apt to think themselves safe, if they follow the Example which you commend. Have the greatest charity for the deceased, but at the same time have a care of them who do survive. I doubt much mischief hath been done this way.

For

For the Dissenters among you treat them with humanity, and do all you lawfully can to reduce them. Let them see you love their Souls, and that all the pains you take about them proceeds from that principle. You may overcome them perhaps by Gentleness and Goodness, and if you do 'twill be the noblest Victory, and of the greatest import.

Abstain from all appearance of *Evil*. Shun any thing that looks like a fault. Your reputation ought to be tender in your own Eyes as well as in those of others. You ought to be free from *suspicion* as well as fault, as *Cesar* said his wife ought to be. Avoid all occasions of evil, all tendencies, and temptations to it. *Go about, go about O Nazarite, and come not near a Vineyard.* This was a saying among the Jews to warn men that they might fly all occasions of evil. The *Nazarite* that was not allowed to taste of the liquor of the grape was advised not to go through a Vineyard. There are many things that perhaps are not in themselves strictly unlawfull, which yet a Divine ought not to allow himself in. Where the thing is doubtfull or of generall ill fame it well becomes you to forbear. There are some games, some forms of speech, some fashionable modes of drinking, some garbs, some practices (allowable in other men) which you will do well to forbear: It becomes us not to frequent publick houses, to be often seen in Fairs and Markets,



Markes, or imployed in secular matters which yet are not things unlawfull in themselves. The Priests under the Law were not at liberty even where the people were. And that in them was reckoned a defilement which in the people was not a fault. We are set apart to an holy Office, and the ancient Canons of the Church laid great restraints upon that Order of men.

Lastly, Let no man despise you. You'll say you cannot help that; honour and fame be it never so great a good is in other mens keeping. And yet St. Paul gives this advice both to Timothy and Titus, [ 1 Tim. 4. 12. Tit. 2. 15. ] But then he puts them upon the onely course to place themselves beyond Contempt. To Timothy thus. But be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine: Neglect not the gift that is in thee by prophecy, with laying on the hands of the Presbytery. Meditate upon these things, give thy self wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thy self and to thy doctrine, continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt save thy self and them that hear thee. [ 1 Tim. 4. 12, 13, 14, 15, 16. ] To Titus he had said, In all things shewing thy self a pattern of good works. In doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity; sound speech that cannot be condemned,



damned, that he that is of the contrary part, may be *asshamed* having no evil to say of you. [Tit. 2. 7, 8.] This is the way not to be despised. None that know you will despise you if you do thus. They may not love you, but they cannot despise you. Do nothing that is mean, and that will expose you to contempt. This is the way not to be despised. Reverence yourselves and your holy function, and let men despise you, that know you, if they can. The truth is, this course will raise you above contempt. On the other hand, he that does low and mean things will be despised. More still they will be despised by evil men, by those who are *and* of their company, and partners in their folly. A vicious Gentleman may embrace but cannot but despise a vicious Clergyman. And he cannot but have a reverence for virtue and real goodness who is otherwise none of its Votaries.

To conclude: Reflect upon your Holy Calling and on the Vows that are upon you. Adorn your profession, and be examples to your flock. Vigorously pursue your great end, and follow the steps of your great Master. Be instant in your Calling, and diligently watch over yourselves and people; and you shall save your selves and them that hear you: And when your great Lord and Saviour shall appear, ye shall likewise appear with him in Glory.

F I N I S.

